

THE ONE TO WHOM GOD LOOKS  
Isaiah 66:1-4

Intro: Chapter 65 ends with some glorious promises of things future for the people of God--wonderful beyond the imaginations of men.

Chapter 66 will end the same way.

But in between the two, in the first four verses of ch. 66, we have another appeal from the Lord, with strong overtones of judgment.

In fact, we can see that the prophecy of Isaiah in some ways ends as it began. In the beginning the Lord denounced their outward obedience while their hearts were corrupted by sin. Remember that in many respects Isa. 29:13 sounds the keynote of Isaiah's preaching.

Religious people will tend to take comfort in what we think of as Christian service. We are inclined to feel that as long as we are doing something for the Lord, doing some service, that that will compensate for our failure to really be devoted to the Lord in our hearts. Devotion becomes mere duty.

Many a sermon has been preached from a cold heart. Hundreds of thousands of people are in church on Sunday morning fulfilling a responsibility, but with no thought of glorifying God the rest of the week. And they think that God will look upon their church-going, or their tithing (as they call giving), with favor and with blessing.

But they are mistaken!

Isaiah tells us the kind of a person that the Lord looks upon with blessing: It is the one who is "poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

There are other related passages which I want to read to you:

- 1) Isa. 57:15-21.
- 2) Hosea 6:6; quoted in Matt. 9:10-13.
- 3) Psa. 51:16, 17, and also v. 6.

We could also turn to our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria who was so concerned about the place of worship, not the heart of the worshipper. Cf. John 4:19-24.

Before we examine some of the terms which describe the person who is pleasing to God, let us note Isaiah's description of a false heart--a person concerned about service, but not concerned about holiness of life.

I. THE HYPOCRITE.

He does many of the same things that a true worshipper does, but there is a difference with God.

- A. He is concerned about the Temple, but he is woefully ignorant of the One Who dwells there. See Isa. 66:1, 2a.

This sounds a lot like the words of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:27, doesn't it?

Who can build a building that will be big enough to house all of God? The Jew who thought that he could was showing how little he knew of God.

Remember what Hosea said:

For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice;  
and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Have something to do, and the hypocrite is right there. But try to teach him something about God, and he just cannot make it!

The true child of God never tires of hearing about the Lord; he can never learn enough to satisfy his heart.

- B. He is concerned about forms and ceremonies, about doing things in the right way and at the right time.

See this in Isa. 66:3.

What they were doing all had its basis in the Law. It was right that they kill an ox, etc. But instead of being acceptable to God, it was a crime, it was blasphemous, it was nothing more than idolatry!

And it is all because he ignores what the Word of God says about the heart. He is satisfied that he is doing things his own way.

- C. He ignores the dealings of God with his own soul. Cf. Isa. 66:4.

The Word of God will occasionally prick his conscience. The Spirit of God continues to remind him that what he is doing is not right before God. But he refuses to listen. It may bother him at the time, but he can soon get busy and put it out of his thoughts.

Consequently, we see the judgment expressed in the first part of v. 4.

What a sad, sad picture, when things could be so different!

But let us look now at the character of a true man or woman of God. Let us call him . . .

## II. THE TRUE WORSHIPPER.

He will be concerned about the Temple. He will be concerned about the sacrifices. He will be sensitive to the Word of God. But there will be certain things about him personally that are lacking in the hypocrite.

We have already spoken of the knowledge of God, as implied here in vv. 1, 2a, and clearly pointed out in Hosea 6:6.

But there are three other things here:

### A. "Poor."

The first of the Beatitudes of our Lord was this:  
Blessed are the poor in spirit:  
for their's is the kingdom of heaven  
(Matt. 5:3).

A man is "poor" when he realizes what he is in himself, and what he is before God!

We are all "poor." The difference is that some know it and others do not!

To be "poor" is to be humble, gentle, meek, submissive to God, dependent upon Him. It means that we know that we cannot bring anything to Him to increase our standing with Him. We are the unworthy recipients of His grace.

Does this describe you? Does it describe me? Do we understand what it means that man is totally depraved?

It is significant that this comes first.

### B. "Of a contrite spirit."

If the first shows our relationship to ourselves and to God, this shows our relationship to sin and to God concerning our sin.

David told the Lord, ". . . a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17).

To be broken and contrite at heart, or in spirit, means that we are smitten in heart over our sins, we are strongly affected in our consciences, and our hearts are filled with regret that we have done that which is displeasing to God.

Are you bothered by sin? Do you confess your sins?  
Do you remember past sins and ask God to keep you from  
committing them again?

One other thing:

C. He that "trembleth at my word."

This speaks of the person who reads the Word, or hears  
the Word, to make sure that his life is in accord with  
the Word of God.

We need to get back to the old fashioned habit of  
fearing the Lord, and trembling at His Word.

Do you remember the story of Josiah when he heard the  
Word of God read? Cf. 2 Kings 22:8-20. This is  
trembling at the Word of God.

Under the first word we had man and God. Under the  
second word we had sin and God. Under the third word  
we have the Word and God.

Concl: Let me add one other word. You find it in Matthew's  
quotation of Hosea 6:6. The Lord said,  
But go ye and learn what that meaneth,  
I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:  
for I am not come to call the righteous,  
but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:13).

Are our hearts tender toward those who do not know the Lord, or  
do we treat them like the Pharisees did? What about even our  
brothers and sisters in Christ--do we treat each other with  
compassion?

And what about our enemies? The Lord said,  
But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that  
curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for  
them which despitefully use you, and persecute you  
(Matt. 5:44).

We pray for the blessing of God, and for revival, but the real  
blessing of God will not come until we pay attention from our  
hearts to the things which are pleasing to God.